THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

An Hitherto Unpublished Elizabethan Sonnet - - -
Poems by George O'Neil, Prescott Hoard, and Others -
Poet or Pedant?—A Book Review - - - - - - - - -

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Sonnet

DAUB ashes on thy Lenten face, and pour
A drink of gall and wormwood in thy glass!
Thy mistress hath deserted thee before,—
The more fool thou, to search and cry, *Alas,*
My froward darling! . . . . .Often hast thou lain
Keeping thy vigil fondly, for her sake,
While Sleep hath crept abed betwixt you twain,
And made of thee a cuckold, wide-awake.

God pity thee, for that thou art less man
The more thou art a guardian minister!
And for my grudging, jealous self, I can
But envy thee, as thou dost find in her
Some rich reward to keep thee satisfied
For thy poor bruisèd manhood, and thy kidnap't pride.

Daniel Drayton

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"We Two Shall Move to Fairy Places."

(Introduction)

CLAIMED of gold heat,
When the wild wind came inflamed, ere the dawn of the blue, blue morn-dawn,
In autumn golden,
Moved and brought up by white hands olden,
I saw a boy's death mirrored in silvery water, near the beginning day,—
Birth work of an old red and white potter,
'Neath the reddened sky of blue, there came unto me
Old black-winged sorrow
Bearing a red-ended arrow.

* * *

(Later: Night. A voice:)

"There is Mars,
(Keeping watch o'er death)—
The imaginary guardian of our breath."

* * *

But shadows gave the fore-warning,
Of a terrible evening storm,
And thunder gave triumphant blasts
And lightning gold warning,
And icy winds chanted
Death warnings as they cast
Their birth and death songs.

* * *

(Finally: in the morning.)

In the simple white dawn,
Suffusing the heavens, the triumphant morn,
Twas the Red Rose of the dawn,
That came forth in the form
Of a red banner above skyline,
(Eh? crimson and fine!)
By the yellow, the intense, the glorious Sun,
Above dust,
Though 'twas hot and dun
On this crust.

* * *

(In the sunshine, I heard a voice:)

"Oh, Farewell, farewell, farewell!
The flight silver of chimes,
And the echoes of Peace in the Norway pines,
And the lost acres of silver thought,
The penned miles of aching thought,
And Life's Roses in the heat,
On nights cloudy and fleet."

"And the soft incense of the wreath
Of the mistletoe gone.
Oh, the silver-white moments in fire;
Of the pyre.
As, from a funereal fountain
Gushed a black mountain.
Oh, the hush!
Oh, the sound of the dust!
Oh, the rotting red leaves
Under the eaves—
In a wind, like the trot of a red horse, on a walk, trotted for miles!"

Howard Parker

The Mortal Rose

I

ALAS, my love, imprisoned in this rhyme,
How shall your beauty to the world be known?
These words are piled like heavy stone on stone,
Though, unlike stone, doomed to a briefer time.
How shall men see through these thick bars, or climb
These barren steps unto the very throne
Where they may see, mute worshippers and prone,
The blossom of all beauty in its prime?
For your sweet splendor marching through my verse
Would be the image of the legend told
By them that know you, and the story prove.
Then readers, reading, forever could rehearse
Your very heart beats that, like bells of gold,
Ring beyond this prison, "Love, I love."

II

My love has left me, and the winter comes
Coldly with storm, and bitterly with woes;
Where there was dancing to the viols and drums,
Black skies fall, and deathly silence goes.
This is the winter perilous, my heart;
But to survive and reach another season,
Then may I laugh at death and turn his dart
To his own breast, and this with what good reason.
Then shall I know the year but not its changing,
Blind to love's seasons, the soft springs, the summers,
Blind to love's moon and stars, and their dull ranging,
Knowing love but a part for pallid mummers,
Knowing at last what every wise man knows:
Earth owns more glories than love's mortal rose.

When You Are Here . . .

THE cup so fragile seems,
So volatile the wine
Of love, that only dreams
Can hold your love and mine;
Nor does love's budding tree
Blind with its sudden bloom
My eyes, though eagerly
I await that flowering doom.

But when between us lie
Streets quieted in sleep,
My passion will so cry
Aloud, that from the deep
Cup of the dark will flow
The fiery wines of grace
Till my lips surely know
The beauty of your face;
Till from that brimming cup,
To wound me in the night,
A sudden tree shoots up
With terrible blooms of light.

Harold Lewis Cook

The Unknown Wind

WIND from beyond the worlds, wind without sound,
Wind of no season and no certain name,
I dreamed and, as I dreamed, unknown you came.
Moving between the trees, along the ground,
No leaf bent to your breath, no branch was found
Broken and dropped. You did not mar nor maim
One blade of grass, but whispering, went, the same
Wind of no cold, no warmth, wind outward bound.

There is a garden where you sometimes stir
Water to cloudy blue, and sometimes lift
Smooth leaves to let the golden sunlight sift
Across the hair and eyes and hands of her
Who waits alone. Wind, is it far to go?
I would be swift upon a way you know.

Barriers

WHAT is between us but the rain that drives
Thin crystal arrows through dividing air?
What is between us but the sunlight where
It slants along the sodden ground and shrives
Each draggled robin and each beaten rose?
What is between us but the wind that fills
All distance, knows each measured mile and stills
Far in immensities where prayer yet goes.

Now in the rain that drowns, the light that scars,
Now in the muffling dark, to choke and blind
Weave your thick words. Twisting, they slowly bind
My harried thought. Firmly they fashion bars,
Forbidding empty hands, checking bewildered feet.
Shall my eyes ever clear, my steps be fleet?

Dorothy Burgess

Jongleur

BETTER be chaff than corn. Tell me,
Do not cattle
Devour full corn? But husks fly free
Whom winds rattle.

Better gay leisure of this leaf
Dripping from oak,
Than acorns crunched and come to grief
That hogs choke.

Grisly doom awaits fat sheaves,
But life will fling
Alms to hungry husks and leaves
Who dance and sing.

The Singer

WHERE winter rains are rusting
Tree-tops that late were gold,
A mocking-bird is singing
Because his body is cold;
Because his heart is lonely
When sparrows chatter and scold.

For he that is born a singer
Yields not when winter is long;
Concedes no shudder of spirit,
Not even a note less strong—
Though closed are all our windows
And no one hears his song!

Katherine Newton.

Notes

HIS mind is like a meadow filled all year,
Where timid birds alert among the grasses
When sheep or shepherd or a shadow passes,
Whirl wings above the sedge and disappear.

His eyes are like the day in mid-September
That finds a trellis in the garden thin
Before the yellow leaves begin to spin
And smother out the wildrose ember.

His body is a sheaf of summer grain
Too finely nourished in a lenient field,
Too sentient in early sun to yield
A year of little rain.

In the Gallery of Antiquities

UNDER a conch of porphyry,
Upon a luminous perch,
Apollo's marble symmetry
Let no fool tongue besmirch.

Here, I concede, stands evident
A thing that God should own,
A cool significant intent
Magnificently thrown.

Through such solidity as this
Rank teeth can gnaw no way,
Nor nests of little reptiles hiss
A hundred times a day.

What you could build to such a back. . .
It is no puzzling thing
That I should sense your spirit slack,
Your forceful pulses swing.

Slower than homesick eagles now,
Because I touch your hands
And draw that glory on your brow
Where God's true image stands.

George O'Neil

Ambition

AN EARTHEN jar I rather take
When I have simple thirst to slake,
And fill it slowly at a spring
Where trickling veins of water sing,
Than with agility to live
In hopes of drinking from a sieve.

Translation

THE conversation of the lake
Lapping against the floating dock
Was cheerful though I could not make
Sufficient language to unlock
The door between its speech and mine
Until I plunged—then line for line
Translations of a thousand years
From lake to man came to my ears.

Prescott Hoard

Snow

THE moon unflakes itself in snow
To settle in a cloudy glow.
This white obliteration drowns
The fevers of a hundred towns;
This white and cool simplicity
Is coating every pole and tree.
And every shift of wind can show
How roofs are shingled with the snow;
And flurries pile for all to see
A gothic, queer, diablerie.

The snow is drifting velvet sleep;
Or it is foam, but frozen deep;
Or apple-blossoms, heap on heap. . .
It is a fog that swirls aglow;
It is a cloud that anchors low.
The snowfall even turns the air
Into a flank of feathery hair,—
With such much cotton is it full,
It makes a heaving side of wool—
Some animal, a fleecy blur,
With cool and soft and fuzzy fur. . . .

Yet these illusions fade to show
The moon unflaking into snow! . . .

Louis Ginsberg

In Two Months Now

IN TWO months now or maybe one
The sun will be a different sun
And earth that stretches white as straw
With stony ice will crack and thaw
And run in whistling streams and curve
In still blue-shadowed pools. The nerve
Of each pink root will quiver bare
And orchards in the April air
Will show black branches breaking white.
Red roses in the green twilight
Will glimmer ghostly blue and swell
Upon their vines with such a smell
As only floats when the breeze is loud
At dusk from roses in a crowd.
I know that there will be these things,
Remembering them from other springs.
All these and more shall soon be seen,
As beautiful as they have been;
But not so beautiful as they
Seem now to be, a month away.

George H. Dillon

Last Song to a Poet

THIS is the ancient irony of words,
That they, the light, the free, the proudly spoken,
More perilous and bright than naked swords,
Should fall in rust and be each one a token
Of musty memory, obscure and broken.

Ah, cool imperious words that gravely strive
To pierce dark separate meanings, lover by lover,
In arrowed ways . . The savage few shall live,
The disenchanted fragile rest give over. . .
Let the cold comfort them, the hard night cover.

But you, who are to me the haunted singing
Of all the world's lost beauty . . let none stir
That song with lesser voices, lightly bringing
Moth-words to music, lovely words to her
Whose very silences are lovelier.

Marjorie Meeker

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ACTING EDITOR: ROLFE HUMPHRIES

Poet or Pedant?

(*Chills and Fever. By John Crowe Ransom. A. A. Knopf, New York, 1924*).

"Unless you do things my way, you must be wrong," is a principle as sound in art as it is in philosophy. The youth running his race along the sunny highway, and the old man digging in the ground for the dusty relics of another day, eye each other askance. Both in reality reverent of life, each mocks the other for neglect. "Philistine!" "Pedant!"

Because Mr. Ransom's approach to poetry is not the athletic one, he will have in his ears, I think, the din of one of these names. There are too many curios in his possession. *Clomb, concumbent, chymist, halidom, ogive, frore, springe, thole, fumiter, tumuli, litten*—such precious antiquities as these make him a shining target for those who profess the virilities of the Fleshly School. Myself, I have been called in turn a member of that school, and a renegade to it. I think I do not like other-worldliness; but I do not see the mark of the beast on John Keats for having written *La Belle Dame sans Merci.* I hope I am no body-despiser; but I suspect athleticism also may be an escape from life. And so a living poet who does no more than open and shut his mouth over beautiful sound has a claim on my ear, I find, and I care very little whither he goes to make his utterance.

Madhouse or marketplace—and who am I to praise one forum rather than another?

Mr. Ransom fools himself with no false pride. His prefatory poem—*Agitato ma non Troppo*—gives us keynote as well as tempo—

> *"I will be brief,*
> *Assuredly I have a grief,*
> *And I am shaken; but not as a leaf."*

And again, in *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son,* we have him

> *"Full of my thoughts as I trudge here and trundle yonder,*
> *Eyes on the ground,*
> *Tricked by white birds or tall women into no wonder,*
> *And no sound—*
>
> *"Yet privy to great dreams, and secret in vainglory,*
> *And hot and proud,*
> *And poor and bewildered, and longing to hear my own story*
> *Rehearsed aloud—"*

And so, in one place or another admitting himself somewhat defeated, somewhat afraid, he winds us his horn from an Ivory Tower.

They seem to be the architectonic concomitants of our metropolitan industrial civilization, these towers. The woods are full of them. Aiken, Cabell, Stevens, Eliot, Wylie—(to name but a few)—what distinguishes all these poets, and suggests an explanation of why they must go where they do, is their exceeding sense of sound. And yet sometimes when the wind is in the right quarter, the listener in the waste land may have some difficulty in telling from which particular turret the call is blown. Witness:

> *"Perruquiers were privily presented,*
> *Till knowing his need extreme, and his heart pure,*
> *Christ let them dress him his thick chevelure,*
> *And soon his beard was glozed and sweetly scented."*
>
> *"He wanders lonely as a cloud*
> *In chevelure of curled perruque;*
> *Masked assassins in a crowd*
> *Strangle the uxurious duke."*
>
> *"His daughters wedded of the plague,*
> *His pigeons wiven of the fox,*
> *All the jewels in his bag,*
> *Gone in shipwreck on the rocks."*

"For Brady had deployed the manifold
Beneath the sacred Principle of Venus.
But desert ladies named him greasy and old,
And the impanelled peers pronounced it heinous. . . . ."

"Gloomy Orion and the Dog
Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;
The person in the Spanish cape
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees."

"A cry of Absence, Absence, in the heart,
And in the wind the furious winter blowing."

". . . . .the bogs
"Are curdled with thin ice; the trees
Are naked; from the barren wold
The wind comes like a blade aslant
Across a world grown very old."

What I have been trying to show is the essential similarity in this kind of poetry, rather than a lack of distinction in Mr. Ransom. There is no doubt that he has his own manner, and a distinguished one. He has written the long line better than any modern I know; he has a very deft ear for the eccentric rhyme. By the use of a very simple device—a short line following a long, and rhyming with it—he has devised a melancholy echo of unusual beauty. The poems *Spectral Lovers* and *Judith of Bethulia* will illustrate what I mean. His lines run into the memory very easily indeed—and that seems to me a proof of poetry, somehow. I have not space to quote all that I like,—for instance

"Close by the sable stream that purged the plain
Lay the white stallion and his rider thrown.
The great beast had spilled there his little brain,
And the little groin of the knight was spilled by a stone."

And *Bells for John Whitesides' Daughter,* and *Here Lies a Lady.*

"Philomela, Philomela, lover of song,
I am in despair if we may make us worthy,
A bantering breed sophistical and swarthy;
Unto more beautiful, persistently more young
Thy fabulous provinces belong."

The more beautiful, the persistently more young will not be harried by *Chills and Fever.*

—*Rolfe Humphries.*

News and Comment

The Nation has announced, rather apologetically, it seems to us, that its poetry prize for 1925, has been awarded to Eli Siegel, a young printer of Baltimore, for his poem "Hot Afternoons Have Been in Montana." Two editors of *The Measure,* Joseph Auslander and Frank Ernest Hill, have received honorable mention; as has Robert L. Wolf, whose prose articles in our summer numbers occasioned no little lively controversy. Clement Wood, Babette Deutsch, and Maxwell Bodenheim have also received honorable mention. To the fortunate contestants we extend our sincere congratulations; and to the editors of *The Nation,* our equally sincere sympathy and appreciation. In assuming the burdens and obligations imposed by this contest,—which is, beyond any question, an annual event of unique interest in the poetry world—the editors of *The Nation* have inflicted on themselves a task whose nature is best expressed by the one word, thankless.

Readers of *The Measure* may be interested to know that the proportion of sonnets reaching our office has increased enormously in the past year. At least one poem in three these days is a sonnet, we should say at a guess. Exactly what this proves, we are not sure. Perhaps nothing. It may be that our contributors, reading our prose, have become canny: or it may be that the neo-Elizabethan trend, of which this age is suspect, becomes more pronounced. God knows that most of these sonnets are very bad; but there seems to be, amid the contemporary darkness of which Miss Bogan wrote last month, a vague groping toward good form in saying things. Robert Frost and Edna Millay become very definitely influences on contemporary writing.

Meanwhile Miss Monroe, 'resolute female John the Baptist of a moron Christ,' lifts up her voice in such wildernesses as *The English Journal,* and refers to us as 'a small but loud group of sonneteers.' And an editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* writes to say that if we knew how much free verse that magazine receives now-a-days, we should not feel so sure its vogue was passing. Correctives such as these do not make us feel too unhappy.

Few men, fewer poetry magazines, are wise enough to know the

glory of suicide in elation. Charles Wharton Stork announces that 1925 will be the last year of *Contemporary Verse*. . . .The all-wise providence that marks each sparrow's fall, ordains that in almost the same hour we should hear of Volume I, number 1, of *The Mesa,* a quarterly magazine of poetry, edited by Albert Hartman Daehler, and published by the Colorado Springs Poetry Society at Colorado Springs. A prize of twenty-five dollars is offered for the best poem of its first year.

R.H.

CONTRIBUTORS

DANIEL DRAYTON is not to be confused with the better-known Elizabethan Michael Drayton. In discovering this previously unknown sonnet the editors feel that they have unearthed a significant and valuable item for the anthologies of the future.

HOWARD PARKER is unknown to us, except as a writer whose poem, coming to us from Elk Hills, Alberta, and written in longhand, excited us more than most manuscripts do. Other editors of *The Measure* concur in not fully understanding what this poem is about, as well as in the belief that it is much nearer to the essence and raw material of poetry than much more competent magazine verse.

HAROLD LEWIS COOK, of Evanston, Illinois, has been a frequent contributor to magazines both here and in England.

DOROTHY BURGESS sends us these two sonnets from Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

KATHERINE NEWTON writes from Bennettsville, South Carolina, to say that her "only achievement of any kind so far has been the production of three very creditable children."

PRESCOTT HOARD has given us in the past other poems of the same fine epigrammatic tendency as these two.

The seasonal panel on pages twelve, thirteen is contributed by a teacher in Newark, N. J., with one book of poetry already to his credit *(The Attic of the Past);* and by an eighteen year old student at the University of Chicago, who is also editor of *The Forge.*

MARJORIE MEEKER was given the 1924 Young Poet's Prize annually awarded by *Poetry,* (Chicago.)

The Measure

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